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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6323
INFO RUTABA/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 6295
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E.O. 12356: DECL: 12/31/99
TAGS: SREF, PINS, EAID, SU, ET, PBTS, UNHCR, ICRC
SUBJECT: SUDAN: THE CASE AGAINST FREE ENTRY OF
ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES

REF: (A) KHARTOUM 15405 (B) KHARTOUM 16427

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. INTRODUCTION: AS THE INFLUX OF ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES INTO EASTERN SUDAN INCREASES, NOT SURPRISINGLY SUDANESE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THIS POLICY RISE. THIS CABLE ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH THE REASONS -- BOTH REAL AND PERCEIVED -- WHY SUDANESE ARE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT WELCOMING INCREASED NUMBERS OF ETHIOPIANS TO THEIR COUNTRY. THE CABLE HELPS TO EXPLAIN WHY SUDAN PREFERS THAT ETHIOPIAN DROUGHT VICTIMS BE FED INSIDE ETHIOPIA AS REPORTED IN REF A. IT ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SUDAN'S EFFORTS TO MANAGE REFUGEE FLOWS ACROSS THE BORDER AS REPORTED IN REF B. MOST OF THE ARGUMENTS CITED BELOW WERE VOICED BY SUDANESE IN THE EASTERN REGION WHEN DCM ACCOMPANIED CODEL KENNEDY TO THE KASSALA AREA DECEMBER 23-25.

3. SECURITY: THE LARGE NUMBER OF ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES LIVING ACROSS THE BORDER INSIDE SUDAN AND SCATTERED IN VARIOUS URBAN CENTERS THROUGHOUT SUDAN INCREASES THE COST THAT SUDAN MUST PAY FOR SECURITY. ADDITIONAL SUDANESE SECURITY FORCES ARE ASSIGNED TO AREAS WHERE

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ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES ARE CONCENTRATED. THESE CONCENTRATIONS OF REFUGEES, SOME OF WHOM OPPOSE THE MENGISTU GOVERNMENT IN ETHIOPIA, MAY ALSO PROVIDE AN EXCUSE FOR GOE FORCES TO ATTACK SUDAN. THE REFUGEE SITUATION MAY CONTRIBUTE TO ETHIOPIA'S WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT SOUTHERN SUDANESE DISSIDENTS. FINALLY, IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF THE GOE OCCASIONALLY INFILTRATES INTO SUDAN "REFUGEES" TRAINED TO WORK AGAINST THE NIMEIRI GOVERNMENT.

4. COMPETITION FOR FOOD: SUDANESE WHO RESIDE NEAR CONCENTRATIONS OF ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF REFUGEES' IMPACT ON LOCAL FOOD SUPPLIES. DURING THE DROUGHT NOW BEING EXPERIENCED BY BOTH SUDANESE AND ETHIOPIANS, THERE IS A QUESTION WHETHER THERE WILL BE ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE TO EAT. EVEN IF LOCAL SUPPLIES ARE ADEQUATE, LARGE LOCAL PURCHASES OF FOOD (SEE PARAGRAPH 7 OF KHARTOUM 16415) ON BEHALF OF REFUGEES TEND TO DRIVE UP THE PRICES WHICH SUDANESE MUST PAY. THE RESULT IS RESENTMENT BY SUDANESE TOWARDS THE REFUGEES.

5. COMPETITION FOR JOBS: THE NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEE, MOST OF WHOM ARE UNSKILLED PEASANT FARMERS, POSES NO REAL THREAT TO SUDAN'S WORKING POPULATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ESTABLISHED ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IN THE EASTERN REGION AND IN URBAN CENTERS DO COMPETE WITH SUDANESE FOR SCARCE JOBS. THIS IS PARTICULARLY SO ON THE GIANT AGRICULTURAL SCHEMES IN THE EASTERN REGION. WHEN SUDANESE UNEMPLOYMENT IS HIGH, AS IS OFTEN THE CASE, THIS SITUATION LEADS TO SUDANESE RESENTMENT.

6. COMPETITION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES: SUDANESE ARGUE THAT ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES COMPETE WITH SUDANESE FOR HEALTH SERVICES AND SCARCE CHAIRS IN LOCAL SCHOOLHOUSES. THIS ARGUMENT IS MORE IMAGINED THAN REAL. HEALTH SERVICES THROUGHOUT SUDAN, EVEN FOR SUDANESE, ARE EXCEEDINGLY RUDDIMENTARY AND LIMITED. THE EVIDENCE ALSO SUGGESTS THAT RELATIVELY FEW ETHIOPIANS OCCUPY SCARCE SPACES IN SUDANESE SCHOOLS.

7. DEFORESTATION: ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM RESULTS OF THE REFUGEE POPULATION CONCERNS DEFORESTATION AND ULTIMATELY DESERTIFICATION OF THE LAND IN THE VICINITY OF THE REFUGEE CAMPS. TEKL EL BAAB IS A PRIME EXAMPLE. THE 30,000-PLUS TIGREANS HAVE ONLY BEEN AT TEKL EL BAAB FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS. THE REFUGEES ARE DEPENDENT UPON WOOD FROM THE IMMEDIATE AREA FOR THEIR WARMING AND COOKING FIRES. ALREADY ONE CAN SEE THE DETRIMENTAL IMPACT OF THIS PRACTICE. THE LAND IS BEING DENUDED METHODICALLY

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BY SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONS IN A LIMITED SPACE. TO THE EXTENT THAT THE REFUGEES BRING ANY ANIMALS WITH THEM, FORAGE IS ALSO DESTROYED IN THE SURROUNDING AREA. THOSE SUDANESE WHO ONCE USED THESE LANDS FOR PASTURE OR FUEL WOOD ARE FORCED TO MOVE FURTHER AFIELD IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR LIFESTYLE.

8. USURPATION OF ARABLE LAND. THE REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS THEMSELVES OCCUPY ARABLE LAND THAT COULD OTHERWISE BE USED BY SUDANESE. ALTHOUGH THE VOLUME OF SUCH LAND IS NOT SIGNIFICANT IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS, THE SETTLEMENTS ARE A VISIBLE REMINDER THAT THIS LAND IS NO

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LONGER AVAILABLE TO SUDANESE. THIS HAS BEEN A PARTICULAR SORE POINT DURING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW ETHIOPIAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AT EL FAU, WEST OF GEDAREF.

9. COMPETITION FOR WATER: AS THE DROUGHT IN SUDAN CONTINUES, WATER BECOMES A SCARCE PRODUCT AND THE WATER TABLE GOES DOWN. WE WERE TOLD THAT THE WATER TABLE IN THE KASSALA AREA HAS DECREASED TWO METERS IN THE PAST YEAR. EFFORTS ARE NOW UNDER WAY TO DRILL ADDITIONAL WELLS NEAR KASSALA FOR BOTH ETHIOPIANS AND SUDANESE. SHOULD THIS WELL-DRILLING RESULT IN A FURTHER LOWERING OF THE WATER TABLE, THE SUDANESE WILL TEND TO BLAME THE REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS FOR SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.

10. INCREASE IN RENTS: A NUMBER OF EDUCATED AND/OR SKILLED ETHIOPIANS WHO ARRIVED IN SUDAN SEVERAL YEARS AGO HAVE MOVED TO URBAN CENTERS. THEY SOMETIMES JOIN TOGETHER IN ORDER TO RENT HOUSING. IN SOME CASES, THEY ARE ABLE TO PAY HIGHER RENTS THAN INDIVIDUAL SUDANESE FAMILIES. THIS PRACTICE HAS BEEN KNOWN TO DRIVE UP THE COST OF RENT TO SUDANESE. CERTAINLY, THE SUDANESE BELIEVE THIS TO BE THE CASE.

11. NEW DISEASES. ONE EASTERN REGIONAL OFFICIAL INSISTED THAT A NAMRU (NAVAL MEDICAL RESEARCH UNIT) STUDY IN PORT SUDAN IDENTIFIED AT LEAST ONE NEW DISEASE THAT WAS UNKNOWN TO PORT SUDAN BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES. THE NAMRU TEAM REPORTEDLY CONCLUDED THAT THE DISEASE WAS INTRODUCED IN PORT SUDAN BY REFUGEES COMING FROM ETHIOPIA. SUDANESE FEAR THAT THIS IS HAPPENING AT OTHER LOCATIONS IN SUDAN AND SUSPECT THAT NEW DISEASES WILL BE SO INTRODUCED.

12. NON-PAYMENT OF TAXES: SUDANESE ARGUE THAT ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES ARE NOT REQUIRED, UNLIKE SUDANESE, TO PAY SUDANESE TAXES. THIS ARGUMENT IS SOMETHING OF A RED HERRING IN THAT ETHIOPIANS ARE NOT LEGALLY PERMITTED TO OBTAIN WORK PERMITS OR TO OWN PROPERTY. IN FACT, OF COURSE, MANY OF THE ESTABLISHED REFUGEES DO FIND JOBS IN SUDAN. IN THIS CASE, PERCEPTION IS PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN REALITY. IN ANY EVENT, IT IS CITED AS A REASON FOR SUDANESE RESENTMENT.

13. DIVERSION OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AID: THE SUDANESE ARGUE THAT REFUGEES RECEIVE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE DEVOTED TO SUDANESE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IF THE ETHIOPIANS WERE NOT DIVERTING THESE SCARCE RESOURCES TO THEIR OWN SETTLEMENTS. ALTHOUGH PROBABLY A SPECIOUS ARGUMENT, IT DOES SUGGEST THE DEGREE TO WHICH RESENTMENT AGAINST ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IS BUILDING IN SUDAN.

14. CONCLUSION: IN SPITE OF THE ABOVE ARGUMENTS CITED BY SUDANESE AGAINST THE CONTINUING INFLUX OF ETHIOPIANS, WE DOUBT THAT THE GOS WILL CLOSE THE BORDERS IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THEY WILL, AS REPORTED IN REF B, CONTINUE TO MANAGE THE FLOW TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE. SUDAN'S TRADITION FOR ACCEPTING, WELCOMING MAY NOW BE TOO STRONG A TERM, REFUGEES FROM ALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES IS TOO WELL ENTRENCHED. ON THE OTHER HAND, MANY OF THE PROBLEMS CITED ABOVE AND EXACERBATED BY A LARGE INFLUX

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OF ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES ARE VERY REAL. THEY WILL PLACE
ADDITIONAL PRESSURES ON SCARCE SUDANESE RESOURCES AND ON AN
INEFFICIENT BUREAUCRACY WHICH MUST MEET A HOST OF HUMAN
NEEDS. SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF ETHIOPIAN
REFUGEES IN SUDAN MAY STRETCH THIS SUDANESE FABRIC TO
THE BREAKING POINT IN THOSE PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WHERE
REFUGEES ARE CONCENTRATED. AS DONOR NATIONS AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS GEAR UP TO MEET THE NEEDS OF
THE ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES, CONSIDERATION MUST ALSO BE
GIVEN TO DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMS CREATED FOR THE HOST
SUDANESE GOVERNMENT. IF THE SUDANESE SUPPORT APPARATUS
DOES NOT GROW APACE, THE REFUGEES WILL SIMPLY MIGRATE
FROM ONE TROUBLED AREA TO AN EQUALLY TROUBLED AREA.
HORAN

END OF MESSAGE

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